

# SOARing

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NEWS FROM THE SOAR INSTITUTE

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## *Rookie Presenters SOAR at ALADE*

SOAR staff members recently conducted their first presentations at a state conference. Timothy Law, Wyetta Ryan, NorQuina Rieves, and Veronica Cross were among presenters at the Alabama Association for Developmental Education Conference held October 31 at Wallace Community College-Selma. Their reflections on this step in their professional career follow.

Tim Law shares, "Presenting at the ALADE Conference 2014, 'Bridging the Gap,' was a very unique experience for me and my colleague, Wyetta Ryan. We are navigators in the SOAR Institute at Shelton State Community College, and we had the awesome opportunity to share with other colleagues from around the state about the SOAR Institute and how we advise the underprepared student. It was such an honor for us to represent our College in this manner. We were granted the opportunity to talk about the great things that are happening in the SOAR Institute and also Shelton State Community College as a whole. Our main focus was sharing some of the foundational principles that have been put in place to advise the underprepared student, which cultivates a winning culture of student success at the College in such a short time. This was a unique experience for me because it was my first time presenting in front of a higher educational audience. I had some anxiety and a little fear, but I relied on the fact that I had been well prepared for this opportunity, primarily because of valuable experiences gained from working in the SOAR Institute on a daily basis. The audience provided great energy and enthusiasm during the presentation. We were able to expound upon the importance of having programs in place that cater to students who are not 'college ready.' If we have the mentality 'teach one, reach one,' then we can help change our educational system one student at a time. This was a great experience, and I look forward to presenting in the near future."

Wyetta Ryan states, "Presenting at the ALADE conference in Selma, Alabama, was an experience that helped to alleviate my anxiety of public speaking. Timothy Law and I presented on "Navigating the Underprepared Student." This presentation highlighted the foundation of the SOAR Institute and how we navigate students and hold them accountable for their academics. As I was asked to perform this task, anxiety began to set in. I kept a smile on my face although inside I was petrified. In my preparation, I rehearsed at home in front of the mirror and with family members and friends. This allowed me to be comfortable with the material and also practice managing time frames for each slide. As the day approached, Mr. Law and I did a couple of practice runs with co-workers as the audience. This was also helpful because they gave constructive criticism that was influential in the presentation. The day finally arrived and I was not as anxious, but I still had some butterflies in my stomach. As I listened to the keynote speaker, Liz Derrough, I noticed the nonverbal cues she used to attract the audience's attention. Our time had finally come, and our presentation was with the first concurrent session. As the people walked in, mild conversations were made, which allowed us to get a good rapport with the audience. Mr. Law spoke first, and he broke the ice with a joke, which made it more comfortable for me to follow. Finally, I approached the podium and began to speak. The key to making it through the presentation was breathing, smiling, and making eye contact. Before I knew it, the presentation was coming to an end, and the audience was asking questions and was still interested in our presentation. Presenting at the ALADE conference was an amazing experience. I got the opportunity to engage with others from various colleges and share ideas and information about underprepared students. I also gathered ideas through the keynote speaker that gave clarification on students' needs and barriers. I felt that we presented information that was influential to other colleges. Lastly, presenting at the ALADE conference allowed me to break the barriers of anxiety in regard to public speaking. I truly enjoyed the conference, and I would love to present again."

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**SHELTON STATE**  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACHIEVEMENT AND RESOURCES**

*The mission of the SOAR Institute of Shelton State Community College is to provide dedicated support to enhance the success of underprepared students.*



## COMPASS Help Sessions

COMPASS Help Sessions began in the summer of 2013. The sessions were created to help prepare students for this all-important placement assessment. Data collected from 2007-2012 shows that on average, 65% of all first-time freshmen at Shelton State Community College test into at least one developmental class. Offered once per week per subject, COMPASS Help Sessions are led by trained tutors with classroom experience. These sessions are free and available to future students who have not tested as well as students who are retesting in an effort to improve their scores. Additionally, sessions include pre-assessment information related to what students can expect at a COMPASS testing session.

Data collected over the past year shows that more and more students are coming to get help before testing. A total of 200 students have attended help sessions. These students have made 251 visits to sessions, indicating that some students come more than once. The chart below is based on data collected from fall 2013 through summer 2014. It shows the percentages of students attending the sessions that placed into college level courses.

Placed into College Level	Writing	Reading	Mathematics
First-Time Testers	53%	76%	30%
Re-testers	75%	77%	29%

By testing into college level courses, our students are saved the time, energy, and money of taking one or more developmental courses.

COMPASS Help Sessions for the fall semester will end December 16, 2014, and will resume mid-January 2015. In order to attend a help session, students must have completed the admissions process and have a scheduled COMPASS test date. Students may register to attend help sessions by visiting <https://trac.sheltonstate.edu>.

### *Rookies (continued from page 1)*

NorQuina Rieves serves as the Tutor Supervisor for SOAR. She says, “This conference provided me, as a first-time presenter, the opportunity to represent Shelton State Community College and the SOAR Institute’s dedication to student success as a first-time presenter. I can describe my experience only as pure euphoria. As one of my colleagues put it, I was “glowing” by the conclusion of our presentation. The aforementioned “glow” was sheer excitement. This excitement was due not only to the thrill of presenting for the first time or the large number of people in the session, but also to the enthusiasm in the room concerning student success and the struggles faced in an effort to make tutoring a viable and effective part of the campus community. With it also came an overwhelming sense of pride in what we do here at SSCC, as well as joy in knowing that our passion for student success is shared with so many people across our state.

The title of our presentation was “Let Your Tutoring Program SOAR.” I was excited to share this moment with my colleague, friend and mentor, Veronica Cross. Through this presentation, we shared with attendees the history of SOAR and SOAR Tutoring Services (STS), what SOAR means, our mission, the services offered through STS beyond tutoring, what has worked, and what has not worked. We opened the session by stating that, although we were there to talk about our services, we also wanted to know about their services and the approaches that have been effective on their campuses. The response was overwhelming. I could not have asked for or created a better experience.

Although there was standing room only available in our session, there was one common theme among us all: going the distance to ensure student success. From this interaction, interests were peaked, and several individuals have contacted us regarding more information about our program and the possibilities of bringing a team to our campus for a visit. I look forward to representing SSCC as an attendee and presenter at future conferences. This experience has not only solidified my belief in our approach and process as a College and division, but it has also confirmed that serving at the community college level is where I was meant to be.”



## Personnel Spotlight

### A Conversation with Tim Law

Each edition of *SOARING* features one SOAR staff member. This edition spotlights Tim Law who started his position as a navigator in August 2012.

**What prompted you to apply for this position at Shelton State?** “I applied for this position for a greater career opportunity in higher education and the opportunity to have a more positive impact on the student body as a whole.”

**Where did you work before coming to Shelton State? What was your position? What did that job include?** “Straight out of college, I worked at the Rite Aid warehouse in Cottondale. From there, I came to Shelton in 2002 and worked in athletics as an assistant men’s basketball coach for ten years.”

**Where did you attend college? What degree have you earned?** “I received my Associate in Science degree from Shelton State in 1997. I attended Centenary College, located in Shreveport, Louisiana, where I received a bachelor’s degree in health and exercise science in 2000. I later attended the University of West Alabama where I earned my master’s degree in counseling and psychology in 2008.”

**Tell us where you grew up and what led you to pursue this profession.** “I grew up in Whitfield, Alabama, a very small, rural town about twenty minutes outside of York, Alabama. I attended Sumter County High School in York. I always envisioned working in a setting where I had the opportunity to serve others, to be uplifting, and to be a positive inspiration in the lives of others.”

**Tell us about your family.** “I am married to Jossette Law, an LPN graduate of Shelton State. We have four wonderful children: Tanisha, age twenty; Arkadia, fifteen; Nyla, twelve; and TJ, eight, whom we recently lost on April 4, 2014.”

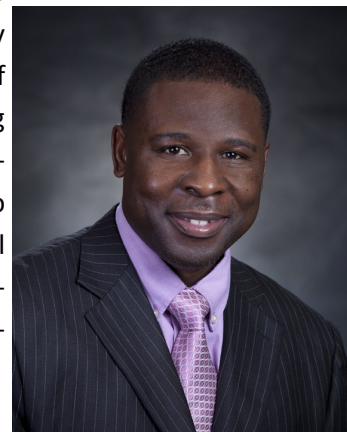
**What are some of your interests and hobbies?** “At this point in my life, my hobbies are spending time

with family and friends, watching my children grow and mature daily, and serving in my local church, the Church of Judah International Ministries. My true joy is having the wonderful opportunity to share the love of God with every person whom I come in contact with daily.”

**What has been the most challenging thing about working at Shelton State?** “The most challenging thing about working in the SOAR Institute was grasping the vision of SOAR and what was required in serving students effectively on a day-to-day basis.”

**What has been the most rewarding thing about working in SOAR?** “The most rewarding thing is to have the opportunity to bring joy each and every day to the lives of so many students from various backgrounds and working with such a loving and caring SOAR staff. They genuinely love to serve others and will do whatever it takes to help students. SOAR has pushed me as an individual out of my comfort zone and has challenged me to reach for higher heights professionally.”

**Is there any additional information you would like to share?** “I’m blessed beyond measure, and I thank God and give Him all the glory. I am also truly grateful for the support of my family and for having been granted this wonderful opportunity to work at such a wonderful College and in the department of the SOAR Institute.”



*Tim Law*